

June 15, 1971

Approved For Release 2002/01/10 : CIA-RDP73B00296R000300090017-2
CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — SENATE

S 9025

U.S. prisoners with the final withdrawal of all U.S. forces by a specific date in the near future.

An agreement on this basis, it seems to me, could act to close out this ill-fated involvement. It would also bring about, I believe, the end of an era in the nation's international relations. Mistakes have been made during the past quarter of a century in the conduct of these relations. Do not think for a moment, however, that it has all been a mistake. Much that has been done had to be done, in the enduring interests of this nation. Much that is being done now needs still to be done.

A vast web of trade and cultural relationships, for example, has been woven with the rest of the world. It serves for the mutual enrichment and contentment of hundreds of millions of people. By the same token, a sudden rupture of the web could bring upheavals and conflicts of a most disastrous kind. We have also begun to perceive in these twenty-five years, I believe, the dimensions of the problem of maintaining permanent peace. We have come, too, to a greater awareness of the significance of human interdependency and mutual concern if the world is ever to know stability. Moreover, rudimentary machinery which can give expression to that awareness is now in existence.

It would compound the tragedy if, in the bitter aftermath of Viet Nam, we were to turn our backs on this advance. It would be a step backward if we were to veer from what has been an excess of international involvement to an extreme of disinvolvement.

I hope it will be recognized, therefore, that it is possible to withdraw from Viet Nam without seceding from the world. If we make that distinction—and I believe the people of this nation will make it—then it should be possible to withdraw militarily not only from Indochina but from the Southeast Asian peninsula without abandoning our vital national interest in what transpires on the periphery & I emphasize the word "periphery"—of the Asian mainland.

Similarly, we should be able to reduce sharply the United States deployment of over half a million armed forces and dependents in Western Europe a quarter of a century after World War II without forsaking the essential mutual pledges of the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance. We should be able, too, to exercise a firm and discriminating control over the enormous expenditures which are made in the name of national defense and, at the same time, still provide adequately for the defense of the nation. We should find it feasible to curb the corruption and carelessness which have filtered into the Armed Forces without demeaning and discouraging the millions of dedicated men and women who wear the uniform. We should be capable of shutting down obsolescent and over-extended aid programs without losing a human compassion for the other people with whom we share the earth.

These adjustments involve, in the words of President Nixon, "lowering the profile" of the nation abroad. If they are to be made effectively, it seems to me that they must be accompanied by a new and vigorous effort of American diplomacy. That effort should be aimed at securing agreements with other nations which make international stability more dependent on mutual understandings and undertakings and less on the unilateral commitment of the military power of this or any other nation. Such agreements in the Far Pacific, for example, would have to involve not only the United States and Japan, but also the People's Republic of China, the Soviet Union, the Philippines and other nations.

In Europe, a new and updated approach would presuppose, a substantial shift of the burden of NATO from this nation to Western Europe—a step which, incidentally, is long

overdue and will be pressed, and pressed hard and continuously, in the Senate until it is taken.

It will also call for agreements embracing both East and West Europe and the anomalous situation at Berlin. Indeed, in a new approach to the security of Europe it might be helpful if the Soviet Union and this nation were to stand to the side for a time and let the lead pass to the smaller European states on both sides of the divide. The efforts of the two super-powers might well be concentrated, instead, on ending the game of musical chairs with regard to disarmament, mutual reductions of their forces in Europe, and the control of nuclear weapons which has been pursued for so many years. In this connection, some risks for peace are clearly indicated if we are to reduce the ever-present and immediate risk of the collapse of human civilization that is inherent in international nuclear anarchy. In matters of aid and assistance we will accept our share of responsibility for the well-being of the world but it will be a proportionately lower share than in the past and it will be discharged in cooperation with others.

In short, in the era ahead, we will get away from the excess of unilateral internationalism which has characterized our policies for the past two decades and try to recast our relations with others to the end that they are multilateral in substance as well as in name, to the end that the common burdens of the world are more equitably shared.

This transition will derive from Presidential leadership but not Executive fiat. It will depend, rather, on a concerted effort in which the President is joined by the Senate and the Congress, with each respectful of the Constitutional sensibilities and responsibilities of the other. Most of all, it will depend on a government which can be trusted by an informed people because it is credible in what it says and does and because it is alert and responsive to their needs.

You who graduate, today, and your counterparts throughout the nation, loom large in what may be anticipated during the decades ahead. You have the vote, thanks to the determined effort of the distinguished senior Senator from Massachusetts, Mr. Kennedy and his amendment and, therefore, are in a position to make your weight felt in the conduct of the government. That is a highly important aspect of your role in shaping the nation's future. Beyond it, however, there is the part which young people will have played in ending the tragedy of the involvement in Indochina.

That tragedy will be terminated; I would hope that it will be terminated very soon. The responsibility for bringing it to an end rests heavily on those of us who are the "old hands" of another generation. To move beyond Viet Nam into a future of peace will devolve just as heavily on you. To open a new era of constructive cooperation with the rest of the human race, to act with compassion and with high purpose, that is your opportunity, you who are the "new hands" of tomorrow. It is your life which lies ahead. It is your nation. It is your world. May you make the most of them all.

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, I congratulate the distinguished doctor majority leader on one additional honor. As we know, he has many prescriptions for the health of the Nation, and I hope he will continue to offer more prescriptions, whether we swallow them or not.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, may I express my deep personal thanks to the distinguished minority leader and to express the hope that not only will both of us together be able to find prescriptions for the ills which confront the Nation, but, hopefully, some cures as well.

FORTHCOMING MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT ON DRUG ADDICTION

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, the President will, on Thursday, send to Congress a message on drug addiction which will include the establishment of a White House office to coordinate all activities concerning treatment, research, education, law enforcement, and attempts to cut off the source of dangerous drugs from Americans, whether in civilian or military life. This will be a very important and innovative proposal, which I sincerely believe meets with the approval of the vast majority, if not all, of the Members of Congress. I, therefore, express my personal satisfaction in the fact that such an important message is shortly to be sent to us.

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9 A.M. TOMORROW

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, on behalf of the distinguished minority leader and myself, we ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand in adjournment until the hour of 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M. THURSDAY, JUNE 17, 1971, AND 10 A.M. FRIDAY, JUNE 18, 1971

Mr. MANSFIELD. I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business on Wednesday and Thursday it stand in adjournment until the hour of 10 o'clock on Thursday and Friday of this week.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, I yield back my time.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Chair recognizes the Senator from Missouri (Mr. SYMINGTON) for not to exceed 15 minutes.

MILITARY PROCUREMENT AUTHORIZATIONS, 1972—AMENDMENT

AMENDMENT NO. 160

(Ordered to be printed and referred to the Committee on Armed Services.)

THAILAND AND LAOS—THE SECRET WAR

Mr. SYMINGTON. Mr. President, I intend to talk briefly this morning on a subject entitled "Thailand and Laos—The Secret War." Prior to reading the text of my remarks, I would note the degree of general lack of knowledge of just what has actually been going on in Laos over recent years is further illustrated in an article by Neil Sheehan in the New York Times last Monday, June 14, in connection with the publication of documents drawn from a study of the Vietnam war. I ask unanimous consent that a part of this story having to do with covert air operations in Laos as long ago

S 9026

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — SENATE

JUNE 10, 1971

as 1964 be inserted at this point in the Record.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to be printed in the Record, as follows:

[From the New York Times, June 14, 1971]

THAILAND AND LAOS—THE SECRET WAR

The covert step-up in the air operations in Laos ordered by the President did not take place until mid-October. The Pentagon account says that one reason for the delay was the Administration's need to "await the uncertain outcome" of negotiations then taking place in Paris between the right-wing, neutralist and pro-Communist factions in Laos. The objective of the talks was to arrange a cease-fire that might lead to a new 14-nation Geneva conference to end the Laotian civil war.

"However, a Laotian cease-fire was not compatible with current perceptions of U.S. interest," the analyst writes.

The Administration feared that during an ensuing Geneva conference on Laos, international pressures, particularly from the Communist countries, might force the discussions onto the subject of Vietnam. Negotiations in the present circumstances were considered certain to unravel the shaky anti-Communist regime in Saigon.

The Administration also believed that even the convening of a conference on Laos might create an impression in Saigon that Washington was going to seek a negotiated withdrawal from South Vietnam and set off a political collapse there and the emergence of a neutralist coalition regime that would ask the United States to leave.

The account notes that in his Aug. 11 high-level policy memorandum on Southeast Asia, William Bundy had "characterized U.S. strategy" toward the Paris talks with the statement that "we should wish to slow down any progress toward a conference and to hold Souvanna to the firmest possible position." Mr. Bundy had referred to a suggestion by Ambassador Leonard Unger that Prince Souvanna Phouma insist on three-faction administration of the *Plaine des Jarres* as "a useful delaying gambit."

"Significantly," the analyst says, "this proposal was advanced at Paris by Souvanna Phouma on 1 September—illustrating the fact that Souvanna was carefully advised by U.S. diplomats both prior to and during the Paris meetings. Other features of Souvanna's negotiating posture which apparently were encouraged as likely to have the effect of drawing out the discussions were insistence on Communist acceptance of (1) Souvanna's political status as Premier and (2) unhampered operations by the I.C.C. [International Control Commission]."

"Insistence on Souvanna's position is another point on which he should insist, and there would also be play in the hand on the question of free I.C.C. operations," Mr. Bundy wrote in his Aug. 11 memorandum.

BREAKDOWN IN NEGOTIATIONS

"It will be recalled that the latter point was the issue on which progress toward a cease-fire became stalled," the analyst remarks. The negotiations broke down in Paris late in September.

American mission representatives from Bangkok and Vientiane met in Saigon on Sept. 11 under Ambassador Taylor's auspices, however, and decided that the South Vietnamese Air Force should not participate in the stepped-up air action in Laos authorized by the President in his directive of Sept. 10.

A list of 22 targets in the Laotian panhandle had been drawn up during the summer for the possibility of such raids, including one on a control point at the *Mugia Pass*, just across the North Vietnamese border.

South Vietnamese air strikes would offend Premier Souvanna Phouma by complicating his political position, the meeting determined, so the air attacks would be confined

to clandestine raids by the T-28's in Laos and the United States Navy and Air Force jets—code-named Yankee Team—operating over Laos. Accord was also reached that South Vietnamese troops, possibly accompanied by American advisers, would also make ground forays into Laos up to a depth of 20 kilometers, or 12 miles.

"The mission representatives agreed that, once the [air and ground] operations began, they should not be acknowledged publicly," the analyst writes. "In effect, then, they would supplement the other covert pressures being exerted against North Vietnam. Moreover, while the Lao Government would of course know about the operations of their T-28's, Souvanna was not to be informed of the QVN/U.S. [ground] operations. The unacknowledged nature of these operations would thus be easier to maintain."

JOINT DEPARTMENTAL MESSAGE

On Oct. 6, a joint State and Defense Department message authorized Ambassador Unger in Laos to obtain Premier Souvanna Phouma's approval for the T-28 strikes "as soon as possible."

But as the analyst points out, the message showed that the President had decided to postpone the accompanying strikes by Yankee Team jets, the "U.S. armed aerial reconnaissance" mentioned in Mr. Johnson's National Security Action Memorandum 314.

Five of the targets in the Laotian panhandle, well-defended bridges, had been specifically marked for the American jets, and fire by the Yankee Team planes would also be required against antiaircraft batteries defending the *Mugia Pass*. The message from Washington excluded these targets from the list of 22.

"You are further authorized to inform Lao that Yankee Team suppressive-fire strikes against certain difficult targets in panhandle, interspersing with further T-28 strikes, are part of the over-all concept and are to be anticipated later, but that such U.S. strikes are not repeat not authorized at this time," the cable said. [See text, cable on Laos Strikes, Sept. 10.]

Ambassadors Unger and Taylor both warned that the Laotian Government, without some participation by the American jets, would not persevere in attacking targets on the Communist infiltration routes. Accordingly, the day before the T-28 strikes began on Oct. 14 with Premier Souvanna Phouma's approval, Washington authorized the Yankee Team jets to fly combat air patrol over the T-28's to raise morale and protect them from any interference by North Vietnamese MIG's.

"MINOR EXTENSION" ONLY

Ambassador Taylor said in his cable that the combat air patrol missions could be achieved by "a relatively minor extension" of the current rules of engagement for American aircraft in Indochina.

The President also postponed for the present the planned ground forays into Laos by the South Vietnamese. Ambassador Taylor pointed out in a cable on Oct. 9 that these would not be possible "in foreseeable future" in any case because the South Vietnamese Army was so tied down fighting the guerrillas in its own country.

Several eight-man South Vietnamese reconnaissance teams were parachuted into Laos in an operation called *Leaping Lena*, but the Nov. 7 report to William Bundy on covert operations would note that "all of these teams were located by the enemy and only four survivors returned."

Mr. SYMINGTON, Mr. President, in recent days the Senate has learned far more about the precise details of the extent and the costs of U.S. activities in Laos than we in the Congress have ever been told by the executive branch.

What we have learned demonstrates the apparent futility of previous legisla-

tive efforts to limit the scope of the cost of the American commitment in Laos.

During the past 2 years, despite all these promises to end the war and despite the growing demand of the American people that this ending be accomplished, the executive branch has assumed the new burden of supporting the Cambodian Government and has assumed ever greater expenses on behalf of the Government of Laos.

Both of these governments today are totally dependent upon the United States.

The actual cost to the United States of the wars in Cambodia and Laos, exclusive of the cost of bombing in the Ho Chi Minh trail area, would now appear to exceed \$1 billion a year. Military and economic assistance programs in Cambodia alone will amount to over \$300 million in the coming year, a figure which does not include any of the cost of continuous American combat air support for Cambodian forces, or for South Vietnamese air and ground forces in Cambodia.

In the case of Laos one is unable to cite a figure for the total cost of this war to the United States. First, because what the United States is doing, and the cost of what we are doing, continues to be cloaked with official secrecy by the executive branch. Second, one cannot cite a figure for the total cost to us of the war in Laos because, it must be said in all frankness, neither you, nor I, nor any other Member of Congress is in position to know what those costs actually are.

Two years ago the Senate placed an overall ceiling on Defense Department expenditures in support of Vietnamese and free world forces in Vietnam and in support of local forces in Laos and Thailand. Last year, we sought to tighten that provision by making it unlawful—we thought—for the United States to hire troops of other nations to defend the governments of Laos or Cambodia.

Many of us honestly believed that these restrictions would make it impossible for the United States to become more deeply involved in Laos and Cambodia.

That was the clear intent of these restrictions.

Nothing, however, demonstrates with more clarity the difficulty of devising adequate legislative controls of the clandestine military undertakings of the executive branch, or the executive's utter disregard of the will of the legislative branch, than the presence today of U.S. financed Thai troops in Laos.

If there should be any lingering doubt on either of these points one need only consider the dubious rationale recently put forward by the State Department in an attempt to justify the legality of paying for the Thai troops in Laos. In a statement issued on the day of the secret session in which the Senate was told the facts regarding the Thai troops in Laos, the State Department acknowledged for the first time that the United States was providing Thai "volunteers" with financial and material support.

The deceptive nature of this characterization of the recruitment and payment of Thai soldiers to fight in Laos will be all too evident to any Member of

the Senate who reads the report on U.S. activities in Laos that was prepared by the staff of the Subcommittee on United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad; and it is with such thoughts in mind that we earnestly hope this report will be promptly declassified so the information now presented to the Senate will also be made available to the public. The distinguished minority leader has joined me in urging this be done at the earliest possible date.

At the same State Department briefing preceding the closed Senate session, the Department's spokesman maintained that the payment of Thai troops was legal because it antedated the enactment of the amendments which had been designed to prohibit it.

Now let us examine this question of legality.

If the hiring of Thai troops to fight in Laos is legal, why has the executive branch gone to such lengths to keep it a secret from the Congress?

If the hiring of Thai troops to fight in Laos is legal, why did the State Department feel the need to point out that this practice had begun prior to the passage of laws designed to prohibit it?

If the hiring of Thai troops to fight in Laos is legal, why has it been necessary for administration supporters to argue that this practice is within the law, on the grounds that the law in question applied only to funds expended by the armed services, while the Thais are being paid from other than Defense Department funds?

If the hiring of Thai troops to fight in Laos is legal, because they are volunteers, or because the arrangements antedated the congressional prohibitions, what difference would it make what funds they were paid from?

To us such tortured and contradictory augmentation can mean only one thing: The executive branch clearly understood the intent of Congress in passing the laws in question but was determined to find a way to circumvent the will of the Congress; and under the cover of secrecy, they succeeded.

The result is precisely that which the Senate sought to avoid: The United States is involved more deeply than ever in the defense of the Government of Laos; and the United States has assumed the responsibility for, as well as the costs of, Thailand's military involvement in Laos—an involvement which the Government of Thailand itself refuses to acknowledge.

The executive branch has been misleading the American people in order to spare the Thai Government the necessity of acknowledging to its own citizens, and to its neighbors, the direct participation of that government in the furnishing of Thai troops to fight in Laos.

Having reviewed previous efforts on the part of the Congress to put an end to such practices, we have concluded that there is but one solution to this problem; and that is to place in the law a ceiling on the amount of money that can be spent by any and all departments and agencies for any purpose in Laos, with a single exception limited to the use of U.S. combat air operations in the area

of the Ho Chi Minh Trail complex in southern Laos.

Based on the above facts, we are introducing an amendment to the Defense Administration bill which imposes a ceiling of \$200 million in the fiscal year 1972 "for the purpose of carrying out directly or indirectly any economic or military assistance, or any operation, project, or program of any kind, or for providing any goods, supplies, materials, services, personnel, or advisers in, to, for, or on behalf of Laos."

This amount is a good deal more than the executive branch has requested for the fiscal year 1972, through the normal appropriations process, for economic and military assistance to that country.

This amendment also provides that if for some reason the executive branch does not consider \$200 million to be sufficient to the fund operations which it wishes to undertake in Laos, the executive branch should thereupon come before the Congress and request the additional money on the basis of a specified description of, with the justification for, the uses to which such additional funds will be put.

In order to give the Congress an added degree of assurance that this amendment and previous restrictive provisions of the law will be complied with, my amendment also includes a provision requiring the executive branch to report to the Congress every 90 days, in an appropriate manner, the purposes for which it is spending public funds in Laos. My amendment will further provide that such detailed justifications would henceforth also have to be made each year at the time when funds for the next fiscal year are requested from Congress.

We propose this amendment in the belief that it constitutes the most effective means for the Congress to achieve meaningful knowledge about where, how, and when the funds it has appropriated have been used; and also to insure that the executive branch take account of the advice of the Congress with respect to U.S. activities in Laos.

The purpose of this amendment is to present the position of the Congress; namely, that the administration cannot continue to prosecute the war in Laos as though cost were no object, cannot continue to prosecute this war with the premise that the will of the Congress counts for nothing, cannot continue as if any commitment can be assumed, or risk taken, regardless of the Congress.

Mr. President, I send to the desk, therefore, an amendment to S. 939, a bill to authorize appropriations during the fiscal year 1972 for procurement of aircraft, missiles, torpedoes, and other weapons, and research, development, test, and evaluation for the Armed Forces, and to prescribe the authorized personnel strength for each active duty component and of the Selected Reserve of each Reserve component of the Armed Forces and for other purposes.

I ask that the amendment be printed.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The amendment will be received and printed, and appropriately referred.

Mr. SYMINGTON. As explained above, this amendment is designed to insure that

no funds authorized or appropriated by S. 939 or any other act "may be obligated or expended in any amount in excess of \$200 million for the purpose of carrying out directly or indirectly any economic or military assistance, or any operation, project, or program of any kind, or for providing any goods, supplies, materials, services, personnel or advisers in, to, for, or on behalf of Laos during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1972."

Mr. President, I yield back the remainder of my time. Before doing so, however, I also ask unanimous consent that said amendment be printed in the Record at this point.

There being no objection, the amendment (No. 160) was ordered to be printed in the Record, as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 160

At the end of the bill add a new section as follows:

Sec. 502. (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no funds authorized to be appropriated by this or any other Act may be obligated or expended in any amount in excess of \$200 million for the purpose of carrying out directly or indirectly any economic or military assistance, or any operation, project, or program of any kind, or for providing any goods, supplies, materials, services, personnel, or advisers in, to, for, or on behalf of Laos during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1972.

(b) No funds may be obligated or expended for any of the purposes described in subsection (a) of this section in, to, for, or on behalf of Laos in any fiscal year beginning after June 30, 1972, unless such funds have been specifically authorized by law enacted after the date of enactment of this Act. In no case shall funds in any amount in excess of the amount specifically authorized by law for any fiscal year be obligated or expended for any such purpose during such fiscal year.

(c) The provisions of subsections (a) and (b) of this section shall not apply with respect to the expenditure of funds to carry out combat air operations over the so-called Ho Chi Minh trails in southern Laos, and over areas immediately adjacent to such trails, by U.S. military forces.

(d) After the date of enactment of this Act, whenever any request is made to the Congress for the appropriation of funds for use in, for, or on behalf of Laos for any fiscal year, the President shall furnish a written report to the Congress explaining the purpose for which such funds are to be expended in such fiscal year.

(e) The President shall submit to the Congress within 30 days after the end of each quarter of each fiscal year, beginning with the fiscal year which begins July 1, 1971, a written report showing the total amount of funds expended in, for, or on behalf of Laos during the preceding quarter by the U.S. Government, and shall include in such report a general breakdown of the total amount expended, describing the different purposes for which such funds were expended and the total amount expended for each such purpose.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under a previous order, the Senator from Virginia (Mr. BYRD) is recognized for not to exceed 15 minutes.

THE PENTAGON'S VIETNAM STUDY

Mr. BYRD of West Virginia. Mr. President, for the past 3 days the New York Times has been publishing a series of articles from a secret study, made in the Pentagon, of American participation in the Vietnam war.

15 JUN 1971

Outwitting Senate to Pay Thai Troops

By TAMMY ARBUCKLE
Special to The Star

VIENTIANE—The Nixon administration reportedly has a new gimmick ready to pay for Thai troops in Laos if the Senate prohibits funds for the Thais, informed sources here said.

The gimmick is to hide payment to the Thai troops serving in Laos in funds earmarked for Thailand itself.

"Formation of force for anti-guerrilla activities in northeast or northern Thailand will be announced," the sources said. "But these Thais will be sent to Laos and the money for that force will be used to pay for the Thais already serving in Laos."

The sources had no doubt this scheme would succeed. They said that although many Thai regular units were used in Laos, the Thai government as a whole

was not fully informed of the situation.

The U.S. government, according to the sources, makes lump sum payments or bribes high-ranking members of the Thai army and government for the use of these units.

Some units are totally recruited from northeast Thailand, where Lao is the ethnic tongue, using the same system.

Recruiting is done there with the help of Thai military commanders. Sources gave this response to questions on feelings among Lao military officials following statements in the U.S. Senate about cutting the financing of Thai troops.

"Now you can see why the (Lao) generals are not worried," sources said on the Senate outcry.

Another Lao source said "you

must understand we need the Thais."

None of the Lao generals was willing to send reinforcements to Gen. Vang Pao, the 2nd Military Region commander whose Meos have been taking the brunt of North Vietnamese attacks in north Laos.

Lao military sources said Premier Souvanna Phouma himself requested additional help for Vang Pao, who lost most of his able-bodied Meos in action.

Meanwhile, Thai troops in North Laos are taking serious casualties, now estimated at 700 killed in action, over half of them this year.

The high casualties were caused because the Thais, with some bravery, made infantry charges up the hill slopes at Ban Na on the edge of the Plain of Jars against dug-in Vietnamese

machine gunners. Lao troops who did not expose themselves to fire in the same action, suffered few casualties. "We did not just charge up the hills like the Thais. We were acting independently," said a source.

Thailand's two battalions which took part in the Ban Na attack were further decimated by three accidental U.S. air strikes on them. These U.S. errors took place on April 1, April 4 and April 6 this year on Thai battalions 904 and 690.

Thirty seriously wounded Thais were taken to Udorn hospital in northeast Thailand and 40 more were treated at Long Cheng.

All told an estimated 100 Thais were killed on the slopes near Ban Na, where the incidents happened.

E - 427,270

JUN 15 1972

CIA Trains Guerrillas in Laos

By Donald Kirk

Newsday Special Correspondent

Vientiane, Laos—The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency has armed, equipped and helped to train a 2,000 man guerrilla force on and near the Communist-controlled Bolovens Plateau in southern Laos.

Highly informed sources here report that the CIA has built up the force, composed mainly of local tribesmen, in the past year in response to the threat posed by North Vietnamese troops, who overran the Bolovens a month ago and now are menacing the Mekong River lowlands.

According to those sources, the CIA is training tribesmen in half a dozen centers west of the plateau from Savannakhet to Pakse, key military and commercial towns on the Mekong still held by Lao troops. Lao Army officers provide the basic training, the sources said, but CIA operatives advise them and supply arms and ammunition daily.

The sources compared the buildup in southern Laos of the Special Guerrilla Unit Battalions, as they are known, with the formation a decade ago of a much larger force of Meo tribesmen in the north. The Meo army, after reaching peak strength of 40,000 men in the mid 1960s, has dwindled to approximately 6,000 after suffering a series of crushing defeats at the hands of North Vietnamese troops. Informed sources here and in Pakse indicated that the new clandestine battalions would not attempt to confront the North Vietnamese directly—or to recapture ground lost to the enemy on the Bolovens Plateau. Unlike the Meos in the north, the southern tribesmen specialize entirely in hit-and-run guerrilla tactics aimed at harassing and frustrating the Communists in regions never penetrated by regular Lao troops.

"These guerrilla units are much more aggressive than the Lao soldiers," an American official said. "They know the jungle. They're bush men. They can operate with a pocketful of bullets and a pocketful of rice." The official said that the guerrillas, drawn almost entirely from two tribes on the Bolovens, the Lo Ven and the Nghia Huen, often

were deployed on ambush patrols along the Ho Chi Minh Trail network, over which North Vietnam sends men and material through southern Laos to South Vietnam and Cambodia.

"They go on foot in groups ranging up to 18 or 20 men," an experienced military source said. "They carry claymore mines and other weapons, establish themselves in likely places and wait for something to come. They're supposed to ambush trucks and columns." The various sources admitted that they were uncertain of the success of such expeditions. "Sometimes they really do well," one analyst said. "And sometimes they sit around for a week and hit nothing. Other times it's hard to get accurate reports on just what they do hit."

Officials estimated that "a dozen teams" of guerrillas were generally posted on the trail network all the time. Still other teams ambush North Vietnamese troops further west, where the Communists are attempting to solidify their gains on the Bolovens Plateau and enlarge their road system.

One prime inducement for joining a Special Guerrilla Unit is the pay, which is considerably higher than that granted to Lao army soldiers and astronomical compared to the subsistence income on which most tribesmen manage to live. The sources said that the average was around \$50 a month when the guerrillas were engaged in full-time field operations. That figure compares with an average Laotian per capita income of approximately \$65 a year.

Another inducement is the assigning of recruits to the regions where they were born and have lived all their lives. "They're fighting for their ancestral lands," an official said. "They know the terrain, and they're highly motivated."

Other sources, however, noted that tribesmen tend to desert quite frequently and return to their homes and visit friends and relatives. "There isn't too much can be done about desertions or long leaves," a military analyst said. "They have a way of coming and going when they please." Lao officials—and their CIA advisers—attempt to imbue some sense of national spirit into guerrillas during their training. "There's not that much you can tell them about jungle fighting," one source said, "But you can try to propagandize them some."

The Central Intelligence Agency avoids as much as possible an appearance of direct involvement in the operation. "It's done by remote control," an American said, explaining the CIA's relationship to the guerrilla units. "The direct commanders are Royal Lao Army officers. The Americans are well in the background." CIA operatives, in fact, work out of offices in Savannakhet and Pakse ostensibly run by the civilian U.S. Agency for International Development (AID). The official CIA cover is the Research Management Bureau to which CIA personnel are often assigned. Research Management headquarters for Laos is on the main AID compound here.

CIA operatives also participate directly in certain training and ambush missions, according to some informants. Analysts said that a "hard core" of one-time Special Forces officers, until recently assigned by the CIA to train the Meo army in the North, has moved to southern Laos to assist in forming the Special Guerrilla Units. The CIA, besides, is reported to be training Cambodian and Thai guerrillas to penetrate regions controlled by North Vietnamese troops in Northern and Northeastern Cambodia. One such camp purportedly is on an island in the Mekong River south of Pakse.

A bitter irony in the creation of guerrilla units in Laos, however, is the little appreciation shown there by the lowland Lao, who view all tribal members as racial, social and intellectual inferiors. In southern Laos, for instance, Lao refer to tribesmen, regardless of their tribal affiliation, as "kha." "The word meant 'slave' originally," an American in Pakse said. "It's almost as bad as calling a black man a 'nigger.' The 'kha' are the only people fighting on our side beyond the Mekong River valley, but the Lao don't give a damn as long as they don't have to do the fighting themselves."